

**Report following monitoring**

**Level of follow-up: Significant Improvement**

**Ysgol Pendalar**

**Ffordd Bethel  
Caernarfon  
Gwynedd  
LL55 1DU**

**Date of visit: March 2025**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and  
Training in Wales**

**This report is also available in Welsh**

## Outcome of visit

Under the provisions of Section 39 (9) of the Education Act 2005, every annual report to parents prepared by the governing body under Section 30 of the Education Act 2002 must include a statement on the progress made in implementing the action plan.

Ysgol Pendalar is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, His Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools that are in need of significant improvement.

## Progress since the last inspection

### **R1 Strengthen strategic leadership at all levels and ensure that responsibilities are defined clearly and allocated in a balanced manner**

Since the core inspection, leaders have restructured staff responsibilities at all levels effectively. They have identified the strengths of individual staff members and have used them effectively in strengthening the senior leadership team and creating a layer of middle managers with clear and relevant responsibilities. Leaders have ensured that all members of staff have up-to-date job descriptions. Everyone has a level of responsibility that is suitable for their experience and skills. This means that leaders understand their duties well and operate more strategically.

Leaders have visited a number of schools across Wales to observe good practice and adopt effective ideas and processes. They have acted on what is beneficial and adapted procedures sensibly to succeed in the context of the school.

All the school's staff work together effectively to provide opportunities and experiences of a high standard for pupils. For example, individual teachers have been planning an exciting and stimulating curriculum jointly under the skilful leadership of senior leaders, while middle managers have been securing resources such as significant funding to ensure educational trips for pupils.

Leaders have set a firm structure for managing staff performance. Initial meetings evaluate staff's previous targets sensibly and set useful targets for the year. Leaders have ensured that meetings are a valuable opportunity for staff to discuss their training needs and professional development. However, the process has not yet been embedded fully and the understanding of a few staff of how to set targets and monitor professional progress effectively is superficial.

## **R2 Strengthen self-evaluation and planning for improvement procedures**

Leaders have worked effectively with the local authority's education officers and the headteachers of similar schools to establish a robust and sensible self-evaluation timetable for the school. The timetable is comprehensive and includes activities to monitor a wide range of evidence. Leaders include a range of voices in their self-evaluation processes and give purposeful attention to parents, staff and pupils. Strengthening the role of the school council was a step towards this. Pupils now know that their opinion is important to the school and that staff will give it serious consideration. Pupils have a strong voice, for example when choosing resources and colours for the 'independent house'. As a result, pupils feel that they are respected and that their opinion matters. They realise that choices they make independently affect their everyday lives.

Leaders have ensured that all staff have received training in effective quality monitoring processes. As a result, staff have begun to complete useful reports following monitoring activities. Leaders scrutinise the reports to ensure the quality of monitoring and to identify aspects of the school that need to be strengthened further.

The school's processes for measuring pupils' progress have improved since the core inspection. All staff have a strong awareness of pupils' current standards and the progress they have made. This enables teaching staff to set purposeful targets for all pupils. This information forms an important part of the school's self-evaluation processes as leaders measure the effect of their provision.

Leaders use the findings of all monitoring processes effectively to identify the school's strengths and aspects that need to be improved further. They have already identified two appropriate priorities for the school's next improvement plan.

## **R3 Strengthen teaching and planning to develop pupils' increasing skills systematically**

Since the core inspection, the school has made strong progress in responding to this recommendation. Leaders have introduced whole-school strategies and valuable professional learning opportunities to strengthen teaching and develop pupils' increasing skills systemically across the school. This includes beneficial opportunities to visit other schools to observe effective practice. Acting leaders have been appointed to co-ordinate this work.

Leaders have introduced effective strategies to ensure consistency and strengthen teaching, which motivate and support pupils. Teachers plan beneficial and purposeful learning experiences and this ensures that most pupils make strong progress in their communication, literacy, numeracy and social skills.

Teaching staff plan effectively to support continuity and progression in pupils' communication, literacy, numeracy, independence and vocational skills in stimulating activities. For example, pupils enjoy developing their literacy skills by listening to stories and retelling them through a variety of media. A few pupils read aloud confidently and discuss what they read confidently with their peers.

The school uses suitable assessment frameworks effectively to measure pupils' progress. Information from these assessments provides staff with a clear understanding of pupils' progress in their skills. Staff are beginning to make purposeful use of these outcomes to plan for the next stages of learning. This has improved the teaching staff's understanding of the purpose of each learning activity.

The school's curriculum gives purposeful attention to the full range of pupils' needs, with a specific focus on the relevant learning pathway to meet the needs of the individual. Leaders have included valuable contributions from teachers towards determining the most suitable learning pathway and class for pupils. This strategy ensures that pupils have access to beneficial activities that reflect their individual interests and needs and motivates them to make sound progress in their learning.

#### **R4 Ensure robust opportunities for pupils to develop independent living skills and move forward to the next stage of their lives**

The school has made sound progress in responding to this recommendation. Since the inspection, leaders have begun to plan and develop valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their independent living skills across the curriculum, which prepares them purposefully for the next stage in their lives. This includes valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their self-control skills.

Most pupils have a tailored individual target which relates to developing their independence. Most pupils make strong progress against these targets. Pupils enjoy celebrating their successes in terms of their independence by receiving the 'Pawen Pero' award in weekly assemblies. Nearly all the older pupils study a range of vocational courses which leads to them gaining units of beneficial qualifications. These include independent living courses and life and work skills.

Leaders have planned beneficial opportunities within the curriculum and through work experience at the school and in the community to promote pupils' independence within purposeful tasks and opportunities that have been tailored purposefully to pupils' individual needs. This includes younger pupils preparing food and serving at 'Caffi Dalar' at the school and older pupils volunteering at garden centres and at a local golf centre. The school has established a company called 'Menter Dalar', which provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to create resources and grow produce to be sold. The school's older pupils have been given opportunities to attend careers fairs and have visited a range

of local employers to learn about work opportunities in the local community. The school has appointed an employment support officer to support this work.

The school's older pupils have been given valuable opportunities to plan and attend residential trips to Liverpool and London. These opportunities ensure an appropriate challenge for pupils, in addition to providing valuable opportunities to develop a range of important skills, such as using public transport, independence, communicating with others, problem-solving and thinking skills.

The school's building and grounds have been adapted to add an 'independent house', so that pupils can practise their independent living skills. Pupils have contributed valuable ideas in planning this new resource.

### **R5 Strengthen the role of the governing body so that their understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement enable them to act effectively as critical friends**

Since the core inspection, the governing body has worked diligently to identify the school's strengths and aspects that need to be strengthened further accurately. They have undertaken different responsibilities to track the school's progress against each recommendation. As a result, they have a sound understanding of the school's current situation.

They have attended a wide range of training to ensure that they are aware of their statutory duties and know how to challenge the school effectively to support and help it to improve. They are now a body that reflect on their role often and try to discover regularly what they are doing well and how they can improve. The governing body has now recruited new members who bring different expertise to expand governors' ability to support and challenge the school.

They hold regular meetings which are recorded effectively and identify relevant actions. The headteacher distributes useful reports to all members before full meetings, which summarise the school's situation and prepare members to ask relevant questions. They have re-established sub-committees which meet regularly. For example, the finance sub-committee meets before every full meeting to analyse and share the current financial situation with all members.

Governors are aware of the qualities and strengths of the school's leaders and how they work together effectively to drive improvements. They are also aware of the job descriptions of all members of staff and the expectations of them.

Members of the governing body conduct regular learning walks with a specific focus. This enables them to see the effect of strategic decisions, such as the introduction of new

schemes of work, and they speak knowledgeably about the effect of new initiatives in the classroom. They welcome external experts to speak to the full body and conduct learning walks with them.

The governors are more willing to challenge the school when discussing strategic decisions. For example, they are fully aware of all the changes that have taken place since the core inspection and all the new initiatives that have been introduced. They consider the well-being of staff when questioning managers about the timing and effect of those changes.

The governors are now operating proactively. They challenge leaders regularly to explain and justify decisions and statements. They are very knowledgeable about the school's situation in terms of leadership, provision, standards and progress and operate effectively as critical friends.

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